

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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TAGS: BDIS BGEN ET

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN COFFEE SHIPMENTS INVOLVED IN US COURT CASES

REF: ADDIS ABABA 6481

1. SUMMARY. COMMERCIAL ATTACHE DISCUSSED LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN CASE REPORTED REFTEL WITH OFFICIALS OF ADDIS ABABA BANK. THEY STATED THAT TWO OF THREE COFFEE SHIPMENTS HAVE ARRIVED IN US AND ARE SUBJECT OF US COURT CASES TO DETERMINE OWNERSHIP OF CARGOES. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO LOCAL BANKERS, OF THE THREE SHIPMENTS THE NEW YORK AND NEW ORLEANS CARGOES HAVE ARRIVED AND THE SAN FRANCISCO CARGO IS DUE SOON. GREEK BUSINESSMAN MR. ZERVOS HAS PRESENTED THE ORIGINAL BILLS OF LADING WHICH HE SAYS HE PURCHASED FROM SOLOMON MAHTEME SELASSIE IN SWITZERLAND WHERE ZERVOS RESIDES. WATERMAN SHIPPING LINES REFUSED TO HONOR THESE BILLS OF LADING DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES REPORTED REFTEL. ZERVOS THEN FILED SUIT AGAINST SHIPPING LINE TO OBTAIN CARGO. IN THE MEANTIME, WATERMAN FILED "INTERPLEADER ACTION" WITH THE SAME COURTS IN BOTH NEW ORLEANS AND NEW YORK. WE UNDERSTAND THAT INTERPLEADER

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ACTION INVOLVES SHIPPING LINE PETITIONING THE COURT FOR

GUIDANCE AS TO WHICH CLAIMANTS SHOULD RECEIVE DISPUTED CARGO. DUPLICATE SET OF BILLS OF LADING ARE HELD BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THREE ETHIOPIAN PARTIES INVOLVED - NATIONAL BANK OF ETHIOPIA (INTEREST IN RECEIVING FOREIGN EXCHANGE FROM ETHIOPIAN EXPORT), ADDIS ABABA BANK (SOLOMON'S BANK - INTEREST IN COVERING HIS DEBTS), AND SOLOMAT LTD. (SOLOMON'S COMPANY WHICH HAS, SINCE HIS DEPARTURE, BEEN SEIZED BY EPMG). COURTS REPORTEDLY WILL HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER ZERVOS OR ETHIOPIAN COALITION WILL RECEIVE CARGO.

3. COFFEE IS REPORTEDLY STILL IN PORTS PENDING RESOLUTION OF THE CASES. LOCAL BANKERS REPORT COFFEE MAY BE SOLD TO PREVENT FURTHER DETERIORATION WITH MONEY FROM SALE BEING AWARDED TO WHICHEVER PARTY'S CLAIM IS UPHELD.

4. THE ETHIOPIAN PARTIES IN THE DISPUTE HAVE RETAINED ROBERT SCOTT OF LOS ANGELES AS LAWYER TO REPRESENT THEM IN ALL ASPECTS OF THESE CASES. SCOTT FORMERLY RESIDED IN ADDIS ABABA. HUMMEL

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